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WINTER SPORTS AND COMMON SENSE

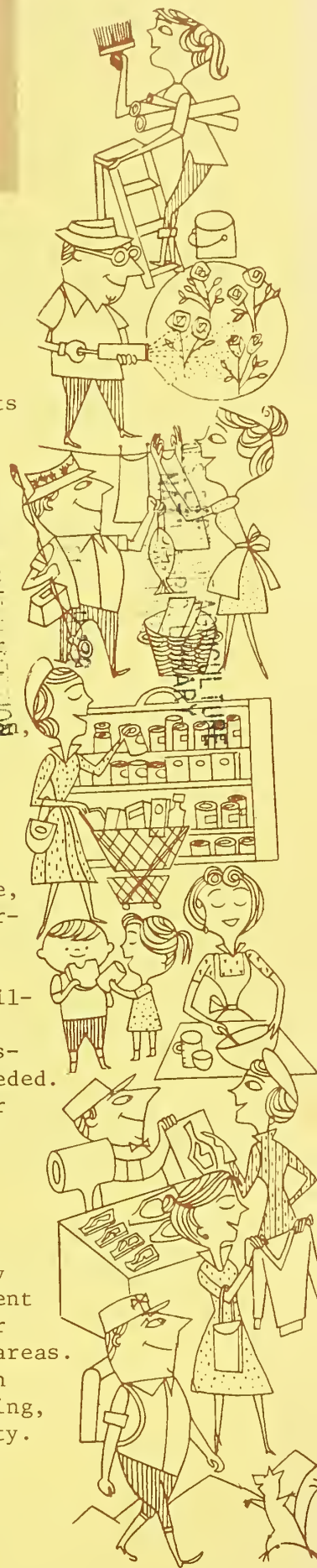
Avoid Woe In the Snow. During the winter months, National Forests are filled with exciting and enjoyable snowtime activities. And even though the Forests are large, in some areas persons traveling on skis, snowmobiles or snowshoes must share a common trail. While traffic jams are not the usual, the use of common trails calls for the use of some common sense to avoid accidents. In the pamphlet, "Winter Travel in National Forests," (PA-1089) USDA's Forest Service offers some tips to help you stay accident-free. Also included in the pamphlet are instructions on what to do if you are lost or injured and the symptoms and treatments for illnesses that could affect winter travelers--frostbite, hypothermia, etc. If you would like a free copy of the pamphlet, write to the Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

NEW LIFE FOR OLD DWELLINGS

You Can Put It There Yourself. With housing prices what they are, many homeowners and prospective buyers are considering the restoration of an older house. USDA's Forest Service has a new book, "New Life For Old Dwellings," which can help you determine if a dwelling--specifically a wood frame house--is suitable for rehabilitation. The book is a guide for planning and accomplishing the actual renovation, using detailed instructions and numerous illustrations for the jobs--large and small--that are likely to be needed. Copies of "New Life For Old Dwellings," (AH-481) are for sale for \$1.70 each from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20420.

CITY AND COUNTRY LIVING

The Mortgages May Be Different. If you live in the city, you may get better home mortgage terms than your country cousins. A recent study by USDA found that existing mortgages on one-unit homeowner properties ran about 10% higher in nonmetro areas than in metro areas. Too, the average length of the mortgage ran about 5 years less in rural areas. While credit terms in rural areas have been improving, those mortgage notes are still higher and quicker than in the city.



WINTER FOOD PREVIEW

America's most bountiful harvest is now winding up. We have the biggest corn, wheat, and rice harvests ever, plus an abundance of fruits and selected processed fruits and vegetables. Consumers will reap their harvest at the grocery store. Early signs suggest food price slowdowns for 1976. During the first half of the year, rises in food prices may slow to a creep.

Beef prices have already edged lower. Actually, fall beef production was a record. There has been a smaller-than-usual supply of grain-fed beef -- the kind that yields most of the Choice and Prime grade cuts. Beef with little or no grain feeding has been abundant. Early next year, the balance will swing toward a larger proportion of grain-fed beef on the market.

Pork prices, too, may have peaked. Chances are they'll move lower in the months ahead. This year, in reaction to slim feeding profits, farmers produced the smallest amount of pork since 1966. Pork production is beginning to turn around.

Poultry traditionally competes with beef and pork, both for feed and for the dollar at the supermarket. This year's bumper feed crops have lowered poultry farmers' costs and are helping offset inflation in other production costs. This means more broilers. Broiler production supplies will continue about 10% above last winter. But don't look for any sharp drop in prices since the demand for broilers will be heavy.

The outlook is similar for turkeys. More will be produced this winter than last, but stocks of frozen turkeys are low right now. The increased production will about keep pace with consumer demand with prices above last winter's average.

Expect egg prices to drop seasonally. Farmers will probably raise output about 2%.

Winter won't bring abundance for all protein foods, though. Supplies of most fish products are tight. With no significant increase in supplies due this winter, consumption will be limited. Shortages are already evident for some major fish products. Frozen inventories are low, notably for shrimp and ground fish fillets. Imports have shrunk, U. S. fishers have caught less, and consumers have bought heavily of a few fish products.

Retail milk prices will move up, following recent wholesale price increases. A little more milk will be available this winter: Farmers are feeding a little heavier, so cows are giving more milk. Butter prices could ease slightly as supplies expand. Cheese prices should be more stable than in the fall.

Fresh and processed fruits will remain good buys. Supplies are larger and prices are averaging about what they did last winter. Apple trees exploded with a record crop in the fall. Also supermarkets will have plenty of grapefruit, tangerines, Temples, tangelos, and grapes.

The orange crop, slightly under last year's record, faces greater consumer demand. Even so, orange prices are expected to decline seasonally and average only slightly above prices of a year ago.

Hurricane Fifi hurt many banana plantations in 1974, pushing prices to a record high last year. Now, with banana supplies increasing and other fruits competitively priced, bananas will cost less than they did in the fall.

Pecans, walnuts, filberts, and almonds will also cost you less than last winter. The larger domestic and world supplies will hold down retail prices.

Look for some lowering in frozen vegetable prices because of large storage stocks and good crops. Many people stopped buying the specialty-packed frozen foods when the recession started. But with somewhat lower prices and an improvement in the economy, these items will become more attractive. Frozen french fries will continue steady in price; sometimes, you'll see them "specialized."

A record tomato crop will bring lower priced tomato products (sauce, catsup, and paste). Look for slightly lower prices for canned and frozen sweet corn, peas, snap beans, lima beans, beets, and sauerkraut.

Domestic mushroom supplies are large again this year, and imports have increased. Yet, prices for fresh mushrooms will be the same or will rise moderately in response to enthusiastic consumer demand.

Though the onion supply is smaller than last winter, any shortage may be supplemented by imports from Mexico, New Zealand, and South Africa. Even so, prices will stay firm until the first Texas crop hits the stores in March.

Fresh potato prices will increase late in the winter, probably by March. The crop fell below last year's record. White beans? They'll also be slightly higher priced than last season because of a smaller supply. Few, if any, pinto beans are being shipped to Mexico this year, so prices should tend to hold steady.

The pinch is off sugar supplies. World sugar output from the current crop will be large enough to allow for an increase in world sugar use and to bolster stocks. Retail sugar prices may not change much from fall levels.

Prices for most bakery items and cereals should stay near fall levels, with lower ingredient costs about offset by rising marketing and distribution costs.

Prices for salad dressings and cooking oils are coming down and should be considerably lower than last winter. Soybean and other oils have already come down in price because of bumper crops and increased supplies.

EGG AND POULTRY

Booklets Revised. Two popular USDA publications, one on buying eggs and one on freezing chickens and other poultry, have recently been revised. While the controversy about which came first, the chicken or the egg, is still unresolved, one must start somewhere. So - "How To Buy Eggs," a pamphlet from the Agricultural Marketing Service, offers timely and money-saving tips on buying eggs. It explains and illustrates the different grades and sizes of eggs and gives information on their nutritive value, uses, and proper storage. The other booklet, "Home Freezing of Poultry and Poultry Main Dishes," is from the Agricultural Research Service. It includes step-by-step procedures for selecting the poultry, preparing for freezing both uncooked and cooked poultry, and 33 recipes for combination poultry dishes that can be frozen for later use. The recipes, each of which yields 24 servings, carry directions on how to divide the prepared food into smaller quantities, how to freeze, and how to thaw and heat for serving. Both publications are for sale from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20420. "How To Buy Eggs," (G-144) is 25¢ per copy; "Home Freezing of Poultry and Poultry Main Dishes," (AIB-371) is 50¢ per copy.

MICROBE-FIGHTING COTTONS

A Finish For Germs. Cotton fabrics get good treatment these days. Some are treated so they stay pressed; some so they are fire retardant. Soon there may be an addition to the list of well-treated cottons--germ fighters. According to USDA's Agricultural Research Service, cotton fabrics that kill or inhibit the growth of unwanted bacteria are almost upon us. Fabrics with antibacterial activity would be welcome in a number of items: Wearing apparel with a built-in deodorant; bandages; hospital gowns; sheets and pillowcases. Presently, a high degree of antibacterial activity and durability up to 20 laundering cycles has been achieved. Research is now in progress to perfect germicidal finishes that will survive as many as 50 launderings and that can be applied simultaneously with durable press, fire retardant, and other chemical finishes already being applied to cotton fabrics.

NEW LABELING REGULATIONS

All, Pure, And 100 Percent Mean What They Say. As of December 31, any meat and poultry product that claims on its label to be "All" or "Pure" or "100 Percent" of anything--believe it. Use of the three terms will be prohibited on labels of meat and poultry products that contain more than one ingredient. The regulation that does the prohibiting was adopted by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) as a result of a court order against the use of these terms on frankfurter labels. Since most processed meat and poultry products contain small amounts of seasoning and curing agents, they do not comply with the court's interpretation of the terms, APHIS officials say. Accordingly, the three terms are reserved for truly pure products.

SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write Lillie Vincent, Editor of Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Special Reports Division, Room 459-A, Washington, D.C. 20250, or telephone 202-447-5437.
